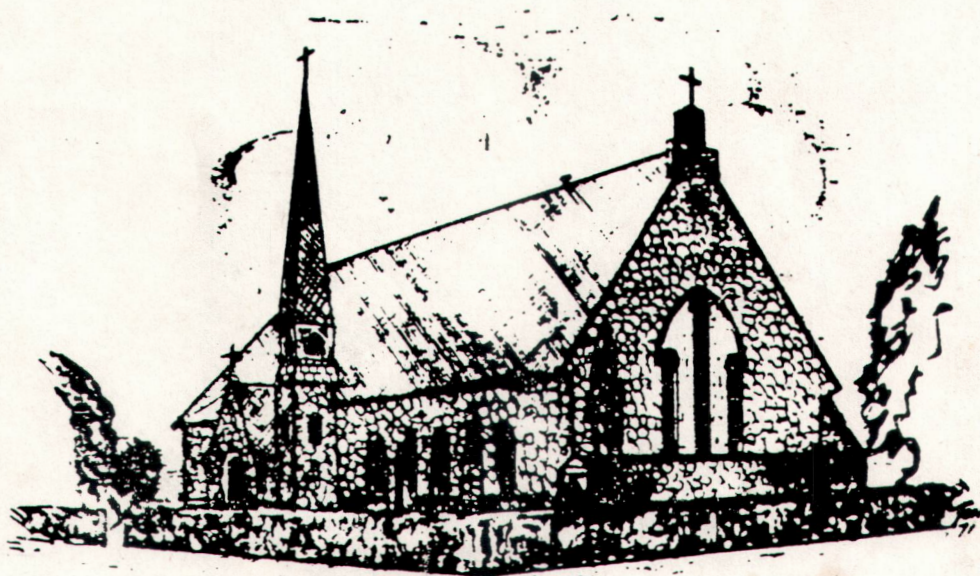


Writings and Reflections
on Twenty Years
of Ministry
at the Free Church of St. John
Kensington

By
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Introduction

Several years ago Archdeacon John Midwood asked me if I wanted to take a sabbatical. I responded that I would if I could ever figure out what to do on one. About a year ago, I had some conversations with various colleagues about my experiences at St. John's. They all encouraged me to write about them. Overcoming my initial resistance to the suggestion, I came up with the idea taking some leave time (I can't quite bring myself to call it a sabbatical) to reflect on and write about my twenty years as Vicar of St. John's. I took six weeks in three two week blocks from June to September, 1996.

The first two weeks, I spent in going over church records: Parish Registers, Service Registers, Parochial Reports, appointment calendars, and newsletters. I also read Dr. Twelves' book, A History of the Diocese of Pennsylvania. The results of that work are the time line and statistical charts found at the end of this document. I used the time line to identify key topics for writing, and began outlining some of them. During the second two weeks, I finished the outlines and completed the majority of the writing. The past two weeks, I have spent editing what I have written, writing on the interviews (two of which took place in September, and one each in June and August), and assembling copies of my work to share with others. During the course of this work, I spent time reflecting on scripture, and different biblical images. I didn't have time to write up those notes, so they are not included in this document.

It is my hope that those of you who take the time to read this will find it rewarding and instructive. I hope to get some feedback from you, and that some of you will be able to expand and/or correct my recollections and conclusions. I have a sense of incompleteness about this work. It is a first step for me in reflecting on the past to learn for the future. I still have work to do in drawing learnings and putting them into practice. I also offer this work to anyone who might profit from reading the story of my ministry at St. John's, in the hope that it will shed some light on your own work and ministry. I look forward to hearing from you.

Finally, I would like to thank John Midwood for his encouragement and support, Lloyd Winter for his being my consultant on this project, and special thanks to my wife, Betty, for teaching me how to use our computer.

A Brief History

St. John's began as a Sunday school on April 21, 1861 in a room on Washington Avenue (now Stella Street) by members of Calvary (Monumental) Church, Northern Liberties under the direction of the rector the Rev. Charles R. Bonnell.

The Rev. George Boyd, who died in 1851, had been rector of St. John's, Northern Liberties. He left land for the church buildings, and his family saw to it that the church was built in his memory, and according to his designs. Bishop Alonzo Potter laid the cornerstone on October 15, 1862, and consecrated the church on April 11, 1863. The Rev George Boyd had been an advocate of the "free" church system. At the time, churches supported themselves by selling or renting the pews. The charter granted on May 12, 1864 expressly forbids the rental of the pews and states they "shall be free". St. John's is the only Episcopal church to include the word "free" in its corporate title. A charter presented to Diocesan Convention in May of 1862 was rejected because it restricted voting at parish meetings to males. The revised charter of 1864 was approved and the Free Church of St. John was admitted to convention that year.

In the early 1860's the area around St. John's contained some bare lots and open country. Franklin Cemetery (now Franklin Playground) had been set apart in 1840, and Elkhart Street was then known as Cemetery Avenue. Farm land extended from Stella Street to Somerset Street. In the area immediately around the church there were only six houses.

By 1870 St. John's was having a difficult time financially. During the tenure of the Rev. Joseph A. Noch, St. John's was taken over by the Episcopal City Mission (later to become Episcopal Community Services). Growth began in 1875 with the subdivision of lots and the opening up of development for housing and textile mills. By 1903 so much growth had occurred that the small Sunday school building, erected shortly after the church had been completed in 1862, was torn down. In it's place was built a very large parish hall with three floors and full basement. The hall contained a two lane bowling alley, chapel, class rooms, gym with a stage, and a kitchen. The church, or at least the parish hall, was a center of community activity.

In 1916 St. John's had a church school enrollment of 954, largest in the diocese. By 1966 the number had declined to 45, and by 1974 it was down to zero. In a sense this is reflective of the environment of the inner city. According to a report done by the Rev. John Carpenter in the 1960's, Kensington's economic decline began just after World War I. Until then it had been a major center of manufacturing and textile mills. Jobs were plentiful, if low paying. The Great Depression hit Kensington especially hard. The economic boom that swept this country after World War II, missed Kensington.

As textile mills closed and moved to the South, manufacturing facilities moved or closed down. With the development of new suburbs in the late 1940's and 50's, the population declined and changed. Over the last 25 years Kensington has lost about 25% of its population. Many who remain would leave if they could. Others stay because Kensington is home, and they are committed to it.

Stability has always been an issue for Kensington and for St. John's. In a neighborhood that has gone from farm land to industrial center to urban decay, stable leadership would be a key for faithful ministry. However, in its first 100 years there were 25 rectors, one of whom, John Lever, served 21 years. Between 1970 and 1972 there were 19 different clergy who served or supplied at St. John's. It was during this time (June of 1970) that the Parish Hall was sold to the School District of Philadelphia. It had become an unmanageable burden and \$65,000 was realized from the sale. The plan was to use this money to build a structure in the church yard. The lowest bid came in at \$90,000, and the project was dropped.

My history with St. John's began on October 1, 1976. Since that time the average Sunday attendance has tripled from 24 to 72. The church school has grown from zero to 64. We have doubled our parish house space. What follows are my reflections upon and understanding of how it happened. It is my hope that others will learn from this, and add what my blindness does not see, and my ignorance does not know.

First Impressions

I had been in the Diocese of Pennsylvania for six years and had never heard of the Free Church of St. John until my name was put in for Priest-in-Charge in March of 1976. At the time I was Priest-in-Charge of the African Church of St. Thomas. From October of 1970 until June of 1975 I was curate at St. Thomas'. When the rector, the Rev. Jesse F. Anderson, Sr. died of lung cancer, I became in charge of a very large, historic black congregation.

At that time I was familiar with and impressed by the Fairmount Deanery and the Fairmount Team Ministry. I also knew nothing of Kensington. But most of all, I knew that I had to leave St. Thomas when a new rector was called. So, I pursued St. John's.

I vaguely remember my interview with the vestry, or even how I found the place. I do remember feeling that they really wanted me to come as their priest. Their main concern seemed to be that they wanted me to commit to staying for three years. That seemed fair.

There were two other candidates for the position, but I was chosen. Then two problems arose. First, they wanted me to start June 1. I said I couldn't leave St. Thomas until a new rector arrived. They agreed to wait. The second problem was that the position was only 1/3 time. The diocese worked to cobble together a full time position by paying me 1/3 time to be staff to the Fairmount Team Ministry, and 1/3 time to serve on the Bishop's staff to develop a South Philadelphia team ministry. At first it was the latter 2/3's of the position that appealed to me most. I really saw the whole package as something to do for three years while I figured out what I really wanted to do. I also would add that I felt very affirmed by the diocese's commitment and effort to "make work" for me so that I would stay in the diocese. However, this was never overtly stated by anyone on the Bishop's staff.

I arrived at St. John's the Sunday after my last Sunday at St. Thomas. I wasn't prepared for the shock. Partly it was going from an all black congregation to one that was virtually all white (one black family). But, mostly it was the size. I had gone from one of the larger congregations in the diocese to one of the smallest. The first two years I was at St. John's the average Sunday attendance was under

25. At St. Thomas there were over 25 parish organizations! I felt depressed.

On top of that, it was becoming clear to me as the months wore on that the development of a South Philadelphia team was a bureaucratic fantasy. Most of the clergy either didn't want it, or didn't understand the concept (for which you couldn't blame them because the diocese wasn't in clear agreement on what they wanted). That left me with the Fairmount Team, which at the time was a saving grace and will be the topic of another chapter.

In spite of my shock and depression, I began to experience St. John's greatest gift, the gift of hospitality in the deepest sense. They opened their hearts and their wounds to me. I found my people to be open and frank, friendly and honest. They wanted someone to care for them and to be there for them. For the first two years that is about all that I did. It was sufficient.

An important factor that dawned on me early on was that almost the entire congregation lived in the neighborhood. Not only that, but they all walked to church! (One woman drove down from Jenkintown). I soon discovered that most of them didn't own cars. All this was very new to me.

Two other factors that I was not prepared for were the income and educational levels of Kensington that were mirrored in the congregation. Both were lower than I would have assumed. I was surprised by number of people on public assistance, disability, unemployment, SSI, and Social Security. I was even more surprised by the number of people who lacked a high school diploma, and the number of people who were functionally illiterate. (I later realized that many of these people were probably learning disabled, and had never had the opportunity for special education.)

In December of 1978 it became clear to me that my marriage of twelve years was over. I was devastated. Early in January of '79 I moved into the upstairs of the Parish House, a row home that had once been the rectory. For the next year to year and a half, it seemed to me that the congregation ministered more to me than I to them. I had the sense of being carried. Yet oddly enough, it was at this time that I got a sense of possibility; a sense of movement and growth.

As I look back to that time, the passage from Ephesians, chapter 3 verse 20, keeps coming to mind: "Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine."

Two Critical Incidents

In the third year of my ministry at St. John's two events occurred that proved to be very significant for the future. The first was my moving into the parish house, and the second was putting a new roof on the church.

In December of 1978 my wife and I agreed to separate, and I needed a place to live. In early January I moved from West Philadelphia into the parish house, the former rectory, located across and up Emerald street from the church. Since the sale of the parish hall in 1970, the row house rectory had become the only available space for ministry other than the church. I occupied three of the four rooms upstairs, and shared the kitchen and dining room with the parish. I later gave up one of the upstairs rooms for more office space.

Because it had been nine years since a priest at St. John's had lived in the neighborhood, the move impacted the parish in several ways. I believe it gave them a sense that I could now be more available and committed to the congregation. Given the circumstances of the move, it provided them with an opportunity to minister to me. It is my sense that with my moving into the neighborhood the congregation began to feel better about itself, and to sense greater possibilities for its future. In fact, it was during this time just after my move that some new people began to show up.

Needless to say, going through separation, moving, and divorce were very stressful. During this time I felt more ministered to than ministering. I also began to see the beginnings of growth, and became aware that most of the new people were going through, or had gone through, separation and divorce! Living in the neighborhood gave me a sense of connection that had been lacking. When I started at St. John's I was paid 1/3 to be Priest-in-Charge, 1/3 to be staff to the Fairmount Team, and 1/3 to develop a South Philadelphia team. Having three jobs and living in an area of the city not related to any of them was not helpful. By 1979 I was 1/2 time vicar and 1/2 time co-ordinator of the team. Living in the parish house gave both jobs a coherence and unity that led me to feel that I was de facto full time at John's.

By living in the neighborhood I became visible to the community (and the community became visible to me!). I became known on the

street and identified with St. John's. I began to see the neighborhood as my parish, and myself as the "village vicar". It was not uncommon for people I didn't recognize to pass by and say, "Hi, Fr. Graff." I made an intentional effort to walk whenever it made sense, so I could make contact with people.

In 1985 I remarried and moved to Oxford Circle, about a fifteen minute drive from the church. Betty owned her own home, and the church needed the space for our growing church school. For several years afterward many people still assumed that I lived in the parish house. I continue to walk through the neighborhood as much as possible in order to maintain visibility and opportunity for contact.

The second critical incident involved putting a new roof on the church. By the spring of 1979 it became clear that our slate roof could no longer be repaired, but needed to be replaced. The congregation still had about \$45,000 remaining in a building fund from the sale of the old parish hall. The income from this fund provided a significant income to the church. Thus the problem was spending the money on a new roof and losing the needed income.

It was decided to spend the money on the roof, and go to the Coalition of Aided Congregations for more support. (St. John's had begun receiving some financial assistance through COAC the year before.) Then a second question arose. Do we put on a 25, 50, or a 75 year roof? At first the vestry considered going with the 25 year roof because it was less expensive. I suggested that we put on the 50 year roof. I thought it was better stewardship of our resources since we could afford it, and it would make a statement that we believed St. John's would be around in 50 years. (The 75 year roof was more than we could afford.). It was hard for the vestry to conceive of doing something with such long range vision. But, they decided to do it, and that action reaffirmed their sense of future possibility and a commitment to it.

Putting on the new roof had an immediate impact on our neighbors. People would come up to me on the street and make comments about how glad they were to see the work being done, and how they saw it as a commitment to the neighborhood. People outside of the church got a sense that we were alive and well, and that we weren't about to close and abandon Kensington.

The other result of spending money on the roof was that we became even more dependent on the diocese, through COAC (now DCMM), for financial support. In November we submitted a budget to COAC that reflected increased costs and the lost revenue. Our request was granted. Since that time the diocese has consistently increased its support for St. John's as our needs have risen.

Worship/Liturgical Changes

When I first interviewed for St. John's I got the clear impression that they were not in favor of liturgical change, or at least had had some unpleasant past experience with it. In 1969 I had gone as curate to a parish in California that was in turmoil over the trial liturgies. I had no desire to repeat that situation. So, even though I had not experienced the 1928 prayer book for almost 10 years, I was willing to use it at St. John's.

I was told by the vestry that when they had gone (in 1971) to having only one service on Sunday, they were told, by Fr. Loeffler, that it had to be the Eucharist, and they couldn't have Morning Prayer any longer. And then they were quick to add that they liked it that way, and hoped I wouldn't change it. I reassured them. (I later discovered that they had been having the Eucharist every Sunday at both services since 1964, and Morning Prayer was only read in the chapel for the church school.)

Since I was under the impression that the congregation had had no exposure to the trial liturgies of the time, I was surprised to discover they were using what became Form II of the Prayers of the People in place of the prayer for the whole state of Christ's church. I simply changed the order of things to follow Rite I, and retained the 1928 book. They were doing the "new" book, but didn't know it.

We began using the proposed 1979 book in March of 1977 (during Lent). It was an educational project of the Fairmount Team Ministry. The Team, through the Bishop White Prayer Book Society, procured books for all five congregation. Each Wednesday night at a different church a group of clergy and laity experienced one of the services from the proposed book. Each parish agreed to use the book during Lent. (Several already were.)

The transition from the 1928 book (re-arranged) to Rite I was seamless. A year and a half later, following some instruction on the differences, and practice of the responses, we moved to Rite II with equal grace. (I recently learned from Fr. Jack Shepherd that they used the trial liturgy when he was there as interim in 1968. The entry for February 4, 5th Epiphany, has the notation, "started new liturgy". By February 28, Ash Wednesday, Fr. Walter Martin began as

rector. There is no indication whether or not the new liturgy continued with Fr. Martin. I doubt it went beyond those four Sundays.)

Over the years the pattern of worship has also changed. In April of 1977 I started a mid-week Eucharist on Wednesdays at 10 AM in the church. The next winter we moved the service into the parish house to save on the heat expense. By spring time the ladies asked if we had to go back to the church. They preferred the informality of the parish house where they sat in a semi-circle on folding chairs. We stayed in the parish house. For this service I retained Rite I after we had adopted Rite II for the Sunday service. I did this in assumed deference to the "older" women who attended. After a couple of years they requested that we just use the same service used on Sunday. They kept getting the responses confused with Rite II. I acceded to their demands.

In 1979 we had the first Good Friday service at St. John's since 1972. Good Friday had become a Team service that rotated among the churches (but not St. John's!). It was finally decided that it was better to have five small services than one larger service and four empty churches. It also helped us to implement the liturgies for Holy Week in the prayer book. St. John's had celebrated Maundy Thursday as far back as I cared to look. We held our first Easter Vigil 1981.

In September of 1980 I inaugurated a Wednesday evening service in the parish house at 7:30 PM. Two years later I began reading Evening Prayer in the church Tuesday through Friday at 5:30 PM. This pattern continued until January of 1990 when I discontinued the Wednesday evening service due to a long continued lack of attendance. In May of 1991 the same fate, for the same reason, befell the Evening Prayer services.

The Wednesday morning service survived even longer. This was in part due to the fact that I would regularly pick up two or three of my shut-ins, and bring them to the service. Gradually this number dwindled as some became too ill to be picked up. Several regulars died. Several more became shut-ins themselves, and by December of 1993 it became clear to me that a younger generation would not replace them.

Since February of 1971, St. John's had had one service on Sundays at 10 AM. In November of 1984 I moved the service to 11 AM so that we could have church school at 10 AM. Several people had

commented on how many children were now attending St. John's, and shouldn't we be offering them church school. So, I made the change, only to find out that that wasn't quite what they had in mind. (Actually, I knew that.) I wanted to set up the schedule so that teachers and students, at least in theory, could attend both church school and church. By March of 1985 a group of "older" parishioners approached me with the lament that the 11 AM service got out too late. They suggested going back to the 10 AM slot. I suggested 9:30 AM, and they agreed. Now it was possible to attend church and then church school, or church school and then church. In February of 1988 the 11 AM service officially became the 11:15 service to give more time for church school and to reflect the time the service actually started.

Although we hoped and expected that those in church school would attend one of the two church services, it rarely happened to the extent we thought desirable. (We being Deacon Kirk and myself). To remedy the situation and to avoid having children attend church school without any connection to the church, we started "Church School in Church" on the first Sunday of the month in October of 1995. Parents, most of whom are not connected to the church, are told that their children's class will be in church that Sunday and they can be picked up at coffee hour. The children are encourage to sit either with their parents or with their class.

"Church School in Church" has raised a number of issues about child friendly worship, church behavior, and so forth. We are still learning. The most positive feedback on the series of "children's" sermons has come from adults. The most common response is, "no one ever explained that to me before!" Except ye enter the Kingdom of God as a child.....

Fairmount Team/Deanery

The fact that St. John's was part of the Fairmount Team Ministry was an important factor in my deciding to go there. The team had begun in the early 1970s, and included: Christ Church and St. Ambrose, St. Barnabas, The Free Church of St. John, St. Luke's, and St. Nathanael's. In 1981 the yoked parishes of Good Shepherd and Emmanuel joined the team. In my interview with the vestry they were very enthusiastic about the team. It was a high priority for both of us. In fact it turned out to be 1/3 and then 1/2 of my job.

Carol Chamberlain was the coordinator of the team when I came on board. Although I was being paid 1/3 time to be staff to the team, I have absolutely no recollection of what that was supposed to entail! In 1979 Carol left the team (she has been full-time), and I became coordinator on a 1/2 time basis. That part of my salary was paid from the St. Matthew's Fund, and endowment left to the Fairmount Deanery when St. Matthew's, Francisville closed.

The team had been formed to deal with the decline of Episcopal churches in Kensington (Christ and St. Ambrose is actually in Franklinville), and to find ways to create a future for congregations that were likely to die if left to themselves. Our motto was, "to do together what we can't do alone". With a full-time coordinator there was a lot of activity: weekly clergy meetings; monthly Team Council meetings; a newsletter; a joint Good Friday service, clergy overnight planning and reflection retreats; quiet days; and I am sure much that I have forgotten. We would supply for each other whenever possible and tried to schedule vacations to make that work, and we covered emergencies for each other. One of the more important aspects of our life together was the team vacancy policy. It basically involved the team coordinator as a consultant to a team parish in the calling process, and provided that the team clergy would also interview any candidates, and would have to concur in the final choice. It worked very well. (The policy had not been in place when I came to St. John's.)

When I became coordinator in 1979, we went through a number of changes. The activities were significantly reduced and the focus shifted. There had always been a discussion within the team as to just what exactly a "team" ministry was. At the same time there was never any clarity with the Bishop and Church House staff as to what

they thought a team ministry should be, and how that related to what we were actually doing. One concept was that of a super parish with one rector and a number of satellite "sites". Some might be worship centers, others community or social service centers. It was never clear how all this would be decided. All of the congregations of the team (with the later exception of Good Shepherd/Emmanuel) were Aided Congregations receiving diocesan support. Part of the concept referred to above was the idea that at some point the team would receive a block grant, instead of grants to the individual congregations.

The other concept we discussed at length, and finally agreed to, was that the team existed to strengthen and support each congregation. The goal was to do what we could together so that each congregation could live out the fullest ministry possible. This became clear in a discussion with a parish development consultant concerning our joint Good Friday service. We told him (Bob Gallagher) how wonderful it was that we could gather a congregation of 75 for the service, something no one church could do by itself. Then Bob asked us how many would each congregation have if they had separate services. We figured it would be about 20 per congregation. At that point Bob replied, "You just lost 25 people." 1978 was the last Good Friday service we held as a team.

There were other reasons why the first concept was never implemented. A significant factor was strong resistance by the laity. They saw it as a threat to their congregations' existence. Another factor was the Bishop and staff were pushing the idea of a single block grant. It became clear to us that it was a bad deal. The diocese was always experiencing budget problems, and we felt this was one solution. It would have been difficult for them to cut each aided congregation, but a block grant to a team ministry could be more easily cut, or insufficiently funded. Then we would have to deal with the problem of how to fund our congregations. We continually resisted this approach, and the diocese never forced the issue.

Once we decided that the team existed to strengthen and support each congregation, our focus became clearer. Team meetings were reduced from weekly to twice a month to allow more time for work in the parish. One meeting focused on program and ministry, and might involved others as a resource. For a number of years clergy and laity from Good Samaritan, Paoli attended these meetings and

supported the ministries of several congregations, particularly Christ and St. Ambrose, and St. John's.

The second meeting of the month focused on support for the individual clergy. It was as a support group that I found the most value in the team. It is what I missed most when the team finally ceased functioning in May of 1990. Up until then the team had been very successful in protecting its congregations from closure, and underfunding. In a sense the team functioned as a political force within the Coalition of Aided Congregations (COAC, now DCMM). Our new "motto" (never stated publicly) was "an attack on one is an attack against all." In this context an attack meant the threat of reduced funding, or the hint of closure. Simply belonging to the team provided a degree of immunity.

In 1980 the Evangelism Committee sponsored a resolution at Diocesan Convention calling for a seven year moratorium on church closures, and more importantly calling for a study to determine what strategies would most effectively turn around inner-city churches. (Do you hear echoes of the Viable Parish Commission of the 70s?) The resolution passed after much debate, but only the first part was really implemented and no real study was done. In June of 1987, as the moratorium drew to an end, the vestry of St. Luke's voted to close after two years of part-time clergy coverage, and no commitment from the diocese for a full-time priest in the future. St. Barnabas' vicar left for Boston in 1989, and by 1991 it was closed. St. Nathanael's vicar of more than 25 years, Jim Mole, retired in 1989, and the church closed in 1992. During this time of transition, the Fairmount Team Ministry had its final meeting on May 15, 1990. It was the end of an era.

The Fairmount Deanery was one of the twelve deaneries created in the late 1960s to replace the convocation system. It had the most aided congregations of any deanery (6), and covered the poorest sections of the city: North Philadelphia, Kensington, Port Richmond, and Fishtown. When I arrived at St. John's three congregations had recently closed; St. Simeon's, St. Matthew's and St. Bartholomew's. In addition to the seven team churches, the eleven deanery churches included: Church of the Advocate, St. Augustine's Church of the Covenant, Church of the Annunciation, and Grace Church and the Incarnation. The latter two never participated in deanery life. Episcopal Hospital Chapel was also part of the deanery, represented by the chaplain. If you count Good Shepherd and Emmanuel as one

congregation (they were yoked and only members of Good Shepherd participated), there were only eight active churches in the deanery.

We were a very close deanery in that six of the eight churches were also part of the Fairmount Team Ministry. (I am sure it was confusing to some outside the deanery.) It was difficult to meet the expectations of a "normal" deanery. Other than a dean (myself from 1983 to 1991), there was virtually no deanery structure. We had delegates to Diocesan Council, and we met four times a year. Twice a year we considered requests from the St. Matthew's Fund.

With the end of the team ministry in the spring of 1990, we began Deanery Clericus meetings in October of 1990. That lasted a year. By the Fall of 1991, St. Luke's had been closed for four years. St. Barnabas' had just closed. Mission El Buen Samaritano, located in St. Luke's rectory, had started in 1988, and closed in 1990. Church of the Annunciation had burned and relocated out of the deanery. The hand writing was on the wall, and the wall was crumbling.

On October 23, 1991 Diocesan Council voted to dissolve the Fairmount Deanery. Church of the Advocate and St. Augustine's Church of the Covenant became part of the Wissahickon Deanery. The rest of us joined the Pennypack Deanery. St. Nathanael's closed in 1992, and Emmanuel merged with Good Shepherd in 1994. It would never be the same.

COAC/DCMM

St. John's has had a history of financial problems. In the early 1870's it came under the City Mission Society (later to be called Episcopal Community Services). After that, came a period of rapid growth and financial stability. Following the twenty-one year rectorship of John Lever, George Krantz was appointed "bishop's vicar" for 1954-55. St. John's and St. Nathanael's were yoked briefly around 1960. John McGrory's poor health made the arrangement unworkable, and St. Nathanael's got their own priest, Jim Mole. Henry Prentiss was "minister-in-charge" for 1963-64. I assume these were times when St. John's could not afford to call a full-time rector. It is not clear to what degree, if any, St. John's was supported by the diocese during these times.

By 1970 it is clear that the clergy were part-time, and some only supply. When David Gracie came in 1972, he was only 1/3 time, and the church received no diocesan support. I was hired in 1976 on a 1/3 time basis also. At that time, St. Philip-in-the-Fields, Oreland provided some support for the vicar. They sent \$150 per month for the church and \$50 per month for the vicar's discretionary fund. I believe this arrangement went back several years.

Within a month or so of my arrival, I realized that the budget was out of balance by several thousand dollars. At that point we received a \$3000 legacy survived the year. The next year we used some money from the building fund to pay the sexton, and recover expenses on the parish house. In the Fall of 1978 I submitted a request to the Coalition of Aided Congregations (COAC) for \$3500 for 1979. A year or so later, St. Philip's ended its financial support.

The budget allocation for aided congregations has never been enough to meet the need. So, the thought of adding another congregation to the list of those receiving aid was not universally applauded. It was seen as another slice being taken from an already too small pie. It was as if any money given to St. John's was coming out of some other congregation's request. In spite of these objections, the request was approved, and St. John's became a grant receiving member of COAC from that time on.

St. John's had been a member of COAC since its inception by Bishop Ogilby in 1970. By diocesan canon, any parish that cannot afford to pay a full-time salary is by definition an aided congregation, even if they do not receive aide. All aided congregations were members of COAC, but those who received financial support were most active.

The assumption underlying the formation of COAC was that the congregations receiving aide (and all other aided congregations) should be the ones to decide how the money should be allocated. It should not be done by diocesan staff. This might work fine if there were enough money to meet the requests, but there never was. When I first began attending COAC meetings, the decision on grant requests was made at the November meeting. It wasn't done before then because Diocesan Convention didn't pass the budget with the COAC allocation in it until October. Then the entire coalition would meet to decide how to carve up the "pie". The total of the requests always exceeded the allocation. The allocation wasn't adjusted for inflation, or for the convention mandated increases in clergy salaries. Any increase seemed unrelated to these two factors. COAC struggled to be fair in its decisions, but often they appeared arbitrary, and were always painful.

After a few years of this agony, it was decided to form a committee, called, significantly, the "pie" committee. They were to do all the homework was impossible for a committee of the whole. The pie committee could never agree on how to divide the "pie", so they submitted to the coalition five options (one from each member). The option receiving the most votes was the decision. It took less time, but for many it was no less painful. The system of options work very well for the Fairmount Team. The options were sent out several weeks in advance of the meeting. The team would meet and decide which option was best for the five of us. At the COAC meeting we would all support that one option. With all the other congregations spreading their votes over five options, we always won. That didn't make it feel much better.

Serving as a funding mechanism was only one aspect of COAC. There were monthly meetings of clergy and lay representatives. Over the years the churches were engaged in a series of peer visitations. The purpose of the visits was to gather information that would be helpful in making grant requests, and also for sharing our ministries with one another. If they had only been for the latter purpose, they might have been more effective. COAC had primary access to the "boiler"

fund for maintenance repairs. One of the ideas prevailing in COAC was that they were there to support ministries, not maintain buildings. We were not allowed to budget more \$500 for maintenance. This was later raised to \$1000. Given the size and condition of most of our buildings, this limitation made access to the boiler fund all that more important. The policy also ignored the fact that our buildings were an asset for ministry. Deferred maintenance only made the problems worse, and consumed more energy in the long run.

Bishop Ogilby developed the concept of COAC as archdeacon under Bishop Dewitt. When he became diocesan, Bishop Mosley administered COAC until 1981, with the assistance of Marie Lennon. until 1981. Then Mr. William Paddock, evangelism officer of the diocese became in charge for little over a year. In 1983 Frank Turner joined the bishop's staff and assumed oversight of COAC, changing the name to the Diocesan Coalition for Mission and Ministry (DCMM). Marie Lennon continued to assist all along.

Although the funding process remained the same, Frank changed more than the name. Attitudes and perceptions began to change, both within DCMM and the diocese. A greater appreciation of our ministries began to pervade the diocese. We were longer no seen as money pits, but as faithful congregations carrying on heroic ministries under the most disadvantageous circumstances. Frank came as close to being an archdeacon as that system would allow. Finally, when Allen Bartlett was installed as diocesan in 1987, most DCMM clergy began calling for an archdeacon. We felt the job was too large and too significant for a staff person with other responsibilities. We also petitioned Bishop Bartlett to abolish the funding responsibilities of DCMM and pay the vicars directly from Church House.

In February of 1989, John Midwood was appointed archdeacon. Two years later some vicar's were being paid directly by the diocese. John had set up an entirely new system. Aided congregations were divided into three categories: six congregations, including St. John's, were designated as diocesan missions; about three congregations were labeled as new missions; and the rest continued as aided congregations. The vicars of the diocesan missions were to be paid directly by the diocese, and their congregations were to be responsible for ministry and maintenance. It was the expectation of new missions that they would eventually move to parish status. The

remaining aided congregations would make various arrangements to maintain their ministries: part-time clergy, some financial assistance, yoking, and so forth.

The vicars meet monthly for support and training. Often the topic is related to our ministries, evangelism, church growth, and stewardship. There have also been training sessions for lay people. This new system seems to be working very well. There is greater sense of collegiality among the vicars than ever before, and many congregations seem stronger than in years.

The vestry of St. John's was very gratified when we were designated as a diocesan mission. We felt supported and affirmed by the diocese. That commitment by the diocese has freed up energy that had been wasted in worry and concern over our future. For me, it was as if a burden had been lifted. I no longer had to spend time and energy on DCMM politics. I no longer felt that I had to fight the system to insure the survival of my congregation. It gave me more time and energy to carry on the ministry to which God has called me.

Relationship with Peace Church

Peace Lutheran Church occupies the same square block as St. John's. We are at opposite corners of the square. Until it was sold a little over a year ago, their parsonage was right next to our parish house. Tom Kadel was pastor of Peace Church when I arrived at St. John's in 1976. There had been a tradition of St. John's joining with Peace for a Thanksgiving Eve service. I preached at the service that Fall. By the next year, Pastor Kadel had left and been replaced by Richard Stevens. The joint services were discontinued at that point.

Pastor Jack Bailey came to Peace Church in 1981. We initiated a series of joint services beginning with Good Friday in 1983. The pattern was as follows: in one year Christmas Day would be at one church and Thanksgiving Eve in the other. The next year it would reverse. On Good Friday we would begin at 12 noon at St. John's with Stations of the Cross (the Lutheran service), followed by the liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer. Friday evening there would be a service of Stations at Peace Church. Ascension Day was celebrated in the evening at St. John's. This pattern was maintained for ten years. It ceased when Jack Bailey left in the Summer of 1993.

Other joint activities with Peace Church were attempted during Jack Bailey's pastorate, but for various reasons, they never took hold. A couple of times we held joint Lenten Bible study. Several times St. John's used the parish hall facilities at Peace Church for receptions, and a spaghetti dinner. For a while we shared a lawn mower. Once we joined them for a parish picnic in their yard.

Pastor Raymond Kvande came to Peace Church as interim, following Pastor Bailey. At the time, he was also interim at Our Savior Lutheran at "D" and Allegheny. In 1994 they requested the resumption of the joint Good Friday service at noon at St. John's. Our Savior and Peace Church became officially yoked some time after that, and it was no longer possible for Pastor Kvande to continue joint services with us.

When St. Nathanael's closed, their senior citizen group moved to the facilities at Peace Church. They are continually worried that the church will close and merge with Our Savior. This rumor also persists in the neighborhood.

Fieldwork Placements

Seven people have done fieldwork training at St. John's since 1985: Virginia Kirk, 9/85 to 6/86 and 7/87 to 12/12/87, at which time she was ordained deacon, and continues at St. John's to this day; Judith Beck, 9/86 to 6/87; Nancy Stroh, 9/87 to 6/88; Mary Jo Melberger, 9/88 to 6/89; John Dill 9/89 to 1/91; and Robin Van Horn, 5/95 to the present.

The fieldwork experience has been very valuable both to the students and to the church. It provides the students with the opportunity to experience a congregation and neighborhood that is often very different from their home parish. The students provide the church with an additional resource for ministry. The students provide me with another point of view on the ministry of St. John's. I am so close to it that the perspective of an outsider is very helpful. (I also appreciate the occasional relief from preaching!) St. John's is a very open and accepting congregation, and this is important in creating the proper learning environment for fieldwork education. It is a growing experience for all involved.

All of the fieldwork students have helped in developing our church school and/or youth program. Some maintained connections with St. John's after their fieldwork placement ended. In the case of Judy Beck, it led to the development of a continuing relationship with St. Christopher's, Gladwyne, that made possible our new parish house.

Our first fieldwork student was Virginia Kirk. She returned to her home parish, St. Luke's, Kensington in June of 1986. When St. Luke's closed one year later, she returned to St. John's as her home parish. Because of the connection with Ginny, many of the people from St. Luke's joined St. John's. Her continued presence in the congregation has been a blessing.

I can't say enough about the value of having a deacon in the parish. There are so many ways that the ministry of St. John's has been enhanced by her presence. We have approximately 25 shut-ins that we visit once a month. It would be nearly impossible for me to do this alone. She has been instrumental in building up the church school. The first year she worked with it the enrollment almost doubled, growing from 15 to 28. Last year the enrollment grew to 64.

She assists with the youth group, vacation bible school, and the Urban Serve program. She organizes the Christmas Toy Shop, spring bazaar, and several dinners or social events during the year. The list could go on, but simply listing all the activities she has organized in the church would not adequately indicate the impact on the parish. More important is the number of lay people she has gotten involved in the life church.

Ginny's secular job is in the I.V. pharmacy at Episcopal Hospital. Her background in the medical field is a unique asset to her ministry as a deacon. It gives her a special gift in ministering to the sick of the parish, especially the elderly. She can interpret medical language and procedures to the people of the congregation who face medical decisions. At the same time, she offers them spiritual guidance, and support. I have also found it invaluable to have a mixed male and female clergy staff. Often women will come to Ginny to discuss something they simply are more comfortable sharing with a clergywoman than with a clergyman. When appropriate, Ginny will ask their permission to share the information with me. They are usually relieved by the offer. Other times, the dynamics are more subtle.

The bottom line is that so much of what has happened at St. John's in the last decade simply would not have happened without the ministry of Ginny. We now face the challenge of bringing more people into roles of leadership and responsibility for the ministries that have been developed.

Partnerships

St. John's has had a relationship with St. Philip's-in-the-Fields, Oreland since 1971. When I arrived at St. John's in 1976, St.

Philip's was contributing \$150 per month toward the priest's salary, and \$50 per month to the priest's discretionary fund, and their secretary was typing and mailing our newsletter. In the past, people from St. Philip's had come to Kensington for work parties at St. John's. How often this happened, and how much fellowship and interaction occurred between the two congregation it not clear to me.

The records indicate that on the second Sunday of September in 1976, St. John's joined with them for a service and picnic at Ft. Washington State Park. This continued until 1979. After that, I made the decision that we would not cancel our only service on Sunday in order to join them. For the next three years, we joined them for the picnic only, and included the churches of the Fairmount Team Ministry. In February of 1980, Fr. Joe Trimble and I exchanged pulpits for the first and only time.

Between 1979 and 1982 the relationship began changing. St. Philip's didn't think it could continue the financial support., but wished to continue the relationship. In late 1979, at a meeting with the outreach committee, members of John's vestry, and representatives of the Fairmount Team, it was agreed that the funding could be phased out, and other aspects of the partnership focused on. The other aspects included support for our food cupboard, continued secretarial assistance, and more involvement of the Fairmount Team.

Fr. Trimble resigned in 1981. Nothing new developed during the interim period. Jack Jessup became rector in 1982, and we went through another reassessment. This time the focus was on increasing support of the food cupboard. They set a goal of raising a metric ton of food a year for St. John's. The picnics were discontinued. St. Philip's reduced their secretary to part-time in 1984. She could no longer do our newsletters and mailing, so we began doing them ourselves. To this day St. Philip's continues to support our food cupboard.

Our partnership with St. Christopher's, Gladwyne began in 1987 with an Ascension Day service attended by members of their outreach

committee. Warren Davis, Rector of St. Christopher's, was the preacher. During this time, Judy Beck was doing her fieldwork at St. John's. She was a member of St. Christopher's. As she was thinking about possibilities for her next fieldwork assignment, the idea developed that she would return to St. Christopher's. While there she would be responsible for overseeing what we were calling the Mutual Ministry Project. Judy stayed at St. Christopher's after she was ordained deacon in 1988, and remained there until 1992. Under her leadership the partnership took root and grew.

An underlying assumption about the partnership with St. Christopher's was mutuality. It would not be based primarily on money, but rather on relationships. It was decided at the beginning that we wouldn't plan anything new, but participate in the ongoing life of each congregation in ways that made sense. We had a series of Sunday evening potluck suppers, and some members of St. Christopher's always attended. They have a series of "International Dinners", and people from St. John's attend. Until St. Christopher's started their own Ascension Day service, some always attended ours. Their biggest event of the year is the "Azalea Day Country Fair" in May. Every year since 1988 several car loads of volunteers come out from Kensington to Gladwyne. In each case, members of both congregation participate in activities that were already happening.

The crown jewel of the Mutual Ministry Project is our new parish house, completed in 1991. I will go into that at length later. Suffice it to say that without the vision and resources, both people and money, of St. Christopher's that project would not have been possible. Without the trust and relationships developed through participation in each other's parish life, the vision and resources would not have been forth coming.

Part of our relationship included pulpit exchanges, beginning in 1989. After Warren Davis retired two years later, they continued during the interim with Dean Evans. In late 1991 Bill Wood was elected rector, and has been supportive of the partnership. We exchanged pulpits May and November of 1992. The last exchange occurred in December of 1994 with Mary Carson, the new assistant priest.

The partnership continues to this day. They are one of the most consistent contributors to our food and clothing ministries. Since 1993, a major focus has been on the gardening and landscape work

around the parish house and church. We began by turning the long neglected backyard of the parish house into a flourishing garden. It required a lot of work, and would not have happened without the help of Joan Harrison. She provided technical and physical assistance, and obtained plants from St. Christopher's parishioners

We are in the midst of the five to six year plan to landscape the church in a manner consistent with the period during which the church was built. Joan has worked to develop a plan, and had professional drawings made of the proposed landscaping. She has provided more technical , and even more physical assistance. St. Christopher's has given some funding for the project. It is our hope that the garden project will create a space of beauty in a neighborhood that sorely needs it, and that it will inspire others to beautify their own spaces. It is yet to be seen whether or not this hope can become a reality in a neighborhood prone to vandalism.

Church of the Good Samaritan in Paoli has a relationship with St. John's that came out of a time when the rector, Dan Sullivan, and other clergy and laity of the parish began meeting regularly with the clergy of the Fairmount Team. Beginning in the mid 80's they attended team meetings once a month. They wanted to establish relationships for outreach in the inner-city. Over the years they were involved with various team churches in a number of ways, particularly with Christ Church and St. Ambrose, and, to a lesser extent, with St. Barnabas. Dorothy Jessup, a deacon out of Good Sam, did fieldwork at St. Nathanael's during this time, and attended team meetings. After her ordination, she became the contact person for St. John's.

We received some modest financial support from Good Sam from time to time for special projects. They would donate a very large quantity of food to us right after Thanksgiving. We would share some of it with Christ and St. Ambrose. We also received Christmas gifts for our church school children from their children. Again, we shared some of these with Christ and St. Ambrose. In 1991, they gave us a substantial gift with which to buy new furnishings for our parish house.

The relationship became even closer in early 1994. I met with their youth minister for junior high, Eric Fialkoff, who was looking for a Summer project for his youth group. We had just restarted our youth group that Fall, and I was eager for new ideas. After some prayer

and discernment, and a couple of meetings, a program called Urban Serve was born. Members of the youth group from Good Sam teach in a Vacation Bible School there the last week of June. The youth from Good Sam come to St. John's in July and run the same VBS program for us, assisted by the youth from St. John's. Both groups live in the parish house from Saturday to Friday. VBS runs in the morning. The youth are engaged in a number of activities in the afternoons and evenings. Our VBS has maxed out at an enrollment of 45. This year, our third, there were 16 youth staff; 9 from Good Sam and 7 from St. John's. Three adults from Good Sam supervised and ran the program. Adults from St. John's, led by Deacon Kirk, took care of the meals, particularly lunch and dinner. Good Sam covers all the costs.

Good Samaritan continues to support our food cupboard, and not just at Thanksgiving. Other churches also support our food and clothing ministry: Incarnation, Morrisville; and St. Aidan's, Cheltenham.

Closures

Several churches in the area of Kensington/Port Richmond had closed in the decade before I arrived at St. John's. In 1966, Holy Redeemer, a Polish congregation, had closed and merged with St. George's, Richmond to form St. George's and the Holy Redeemer. About three years later, the combined congregation was closed. In 1968, St. Mary of the Annunciation, an Italian congregation located at Memphis and Willard, closed. St. Simeon, 8th and Lehigh, closed in the early 1970's. In the course of my ministry in Kensington, I still come across former members of these congregations. They have not forgotten what happened.

Given the history of church closings in the city of Philadelphia, the threat of closure hung over the head of every struggling congregation. One response was the development of the Fairmount Team Ministry. Another response was a resolution presented to the Diocesan Convention in October of 1980 declaring a seven year moratorium on church closures. Its passage was a sign of hope and gave breathing room to some struggling, fearful congregations. As the seven years drew to a close, anxieties began to rise. Rumors circulated among vicars of aided congregations that Church House had a "hit list" of churches slated for closure once the moratorium ended. Of course, everyone's list was different. I never thought that Church House was that organized. I feared closures would happen by default.

It was in this climate that St. Luke's, Kensington endured a painful interim. Their full-time vicar left in 1985, and they went with a part-time interim priest. The ministry suffered from lack of full-time attention. Then in the midst of it, the interim left to take another parish. He left abruptly, just before Palm Sunday. Suddenly, the congregation had to rely on supply clergy as best they could. They really never recovered. By the first of the next year, they had a part-time priest, who was also part-time chaplain at Episcopal Hospital. (The hospital and St. Luke's are on the same block.)

The vestry continued to hope for a full-time vicar. In 1987 the chaplain, Carl Metzger, accepted a full-time appointment as chaplain at the hospital. I had been working with vestry off and on under the Fairmount Team vacancy policy. I knew their frustration and anger.

Their numbers were dwindling and the neighborhood was changing. It was becoming increasingly more Hispanic. They were afraid for the future. They could get no clear commitments from the diocese. There was a rumor that St. Luke's was on the "hit list". There was a rumor that the diocese wanted a Spanish speaking priest to be vicar. The vestry felt they could go on no longer. On June 11, 1987 they voted to close, rather than to be closed.

This put the diocese in a bit of a bind. They considered selling the church building. In the meantime, St. Luke's parish hall had been leased on a long term basis to Ken Crest Services, who had just made extensive renovations to the building. Several months later it was discovered that the diocese didn't own the buildings! They only belonged to St. Luke's as long as they were being used as an Episcopal church. If not, they reverted to Episcopal Hospital, which no longer has any legal connection with the diocese.

Suddenly, it seemed like a good idea to begin an Hispanic congregation at St. Luke's. In 1988, Roberto Maldonado was brought in to do just that. With a huge church and no parish hall space available, the plan was unworkable. But, Roberto went on to try to develop an Hispanic ministry using the former rectory of St. Luke's (which the diocese did own). After two years or so, this work was terminated, and Roberto was put in charge of St. Barnabas, 3rd and Dauphin. By 1991, St. Barnabas was closed, and the building eventually sold to the day care center it had housed since the late 60's.

When St. Luke's closed, a few transferred to Good Shepherd, some went to St. Nathanael's, and thirteen wound up at St. John's by the end of the year. But, I was concerned with the number that simply refused to go anywhere, and disappeared. A few of the people from St. Barnabas went to Church of the Advocate, but most of them just disappeared.

Jim Mole served St. Nathanael's from 1961 to 1989. After he retired, the church had four interim clergy in three years, and by 1992 it was decided that St. Nathanael's would be closed. As soon as the decision was made, I determined that I would not allow what happened with St. Luke's and St. Barnabas to happen again. I wasn't going to sit around and see who might show up at St. John's, and wonder about all the people who disappeared.

The first thing I did was ask the interim priest for a parish list. Not surprising, there wasn't one. But he did give me the vestry list. I knew almost all of them. Through the Fairmount Team, we all knew the leadership of each other's parish. I had initially worked with the vestry following Jim Mole's retirement. This list would become my priority calling list.

The final Sunday service was set for April 26th. There was a lot of anger in the congregation, and a lot of talk about leaving the Episcopal Church and joining Our Savior Lutheran, across the street. But Jim Mole came back, and from what I understand, told them not to leave, that there were Episcopalians, and should be loyal to the church. He added that he hadn't spent twenty-eight years at St. Nathanael's only to have them leave the Episcopal Church. It was the best thing he could have done. It made my task a lot easier.

After I got the vestry list, I called Barbara Ogilby at Church House, and arranged to have the St. Nathanael's mailing list for the Pennsylvania Episcopalian sent to me, and merged with our mailing list. In May, our vestry sent a letter to the people of St. Nathanael's expressing regret at the closure, and reassuring them that they would be made welcome at St. John's. The letter also said that they should feel free to call on me in the event of an pastoral concern, and that I would be calling on each and every one of them over the Summer.

Some of the people started to come to us as soon as Sunday service's had ceased. These I called on immediately. Most of the people continued at St. Nathanael's through June, attending a Saturday afternoon service. On May 23rd, the Memorial Day weekend, I celebrated and preached at that service. This gave me the opportunity to meet several members that I did not know. At that time, a number of folks indicated that they would be coming to St. John's when the Saturday services were over at the end of June. A few said they were taking the Summer off, but they would be at St. John's in September.

I spent most of July and August calling on the people. Most were hurting from the closure. Some were angry at the diocese. Others were confused, and wanted to know why their church had to be closed. I didn't try to answer. Without exception, my visits were well received. Of all the people I called on two said Grace and the Incarnation was more convenient for them; one said she would be

going to the Roman Catholic church with her neighbor (She could walk to it,); one told me she was moving to New Jersey; and one I was never able to contact after three attempts. Everyone else showed up at St. John's, including eight people who weren't on my list.

That year we added thirty-two members from St. Nathanael's to our rolls. We also added eleven other people that year, going from 107 baptized members in 1991 to 150 at the end of 1992. We are still dealing with and benefiting from the impact of that explosion in growth.

As people came in from St. Nathanael's, many expressed a concern that we might close also. They brought that fear with them. I reassured them that St. John's being a Diocesan Mission meant that the diocese had made a commitment to keep St. John's open. A line had finally been drawn in the sand. Where there had been a team, now there was only St. John's. We no longer had the same boundaries. We were no longer all in the same zip code. Not everyone walked to church. We had moved from being a family size church to a pastoral size church in one year. We are still working out the implications of that.

The New Parish House

The first Sunday school building at St. John's was erected after construction was completed on the church in 1862. By the early 1900's, this building had become inadequate. It was torn down and replaced by a large three story parish hall with a full basement. By 1970, the church could no longer afford the upkeep on the building. For number of years, space in the building had been rented to the Philadelphia School District as an annex to the Conwell School on Clearfield Street. In June of 1970, the building was sold to the School District for \$66,000.

The idea was to use the money from the sale to build a smaller structure on the back church yard. Plans were drawn up and estimates made. The lowest estimate was \$90,000. Instead of seeing that they were 2/3's of the way there, and trying to raise the remainder, the plan was scrapped. At the time of the sale, they were in an interim period, and simply had no real vision and leadership. Some of the money was used to put a new boiler in the church, and to do some renovations on the former rectory, now a parish house, at 3089 Emerald Street.

By 1976, the building fund was down to \$45,000, and in 1979 most of it was spent on a new roof for the church. Prior to my arrival, there had been some discussion about doing something with 3091, the row house next door. The property was not for sale, and the idea was dropped. In the early 1980's, when I heard of the idea, I decided to pursue it. At that time, the building was vacant. The concept was to remove most of the party wall on the first floor, and support the second floor with a fifty foot I-beam. This would have doubled our space for ministry. I was encouraged by the diocese look into it further and have drawings made up. The drawings were made at a cost of \$4500, and the estimated cost for the work of the I-beam installation only, with no other renovations, was \$50,000. The diocese decided it was too much. (They did pay for the drawings.)

In the mid 80's, I had some conversations with Gil Avery, Director of ECS, about church sponsored public housing. We talked about building senior citizen apartments with a community center on our back church yard. Building a community center might be a space shared by the church, and solve our need for a parish hall. We never

got beyond the discussion phase. Then on June 15, 1986, Bishop Bartlett made his first parish visit to St. John's. In a meeting with the vestry and other parishioners, we shared with him the idea of a senior citizen apartment building and community center. Bishop Bartlett was intrigued by the idea, and encouraged us to "think big", and submit a proposal to the Bishop's Mission Campaign that was in the beginning stages. We did this, but it went no further.

I still knew, that in order for St. John's to grow, we needed more space than a single row house. In May of 1987, on Ascension Day, a group of folks joined us for our service as the beginning of the Mutual Ministry Project between St. John's and St. Christopher's, Gladwyne. Following the service, we adjourned to the parish house for refreshments. They were amazed at the limited space we had, and how efficiently we used it. I was telling Paul Abbott the story of the old parish hall, and of past hopes. As he stood by the party wall, he tapped it with his knuckles, and said, "Can't we just knock this wall down?", as if he were some kind of latter day Joshua. But in that moment, the vision was reborn.

Informal discussions followed, and it became clear that it was the kind of project that could catch the imagination of the people of St. Christopher's. But was it possible? We still didn't know. In April of the next year (1988), we had a vestry planning day with Lloyd Winter as a consultant. Out of that day came the clear goal of expanding our space for ministry. We sensed that God was calling us to more ministry, and would provide the space in which to do it.

Don Carlson, an engineer from St. Christopher's, met with me in June. He was fascinated by the idea, and agreed that it was very doable. He suggested a twelve foot wide opening in the party wall on both the first and second floors, instead of removing a fifty foot section on the first floor only. A week or so later, Don sent us a letter saying the project was feasible, and could probably be done for a about \$50,000. That was exactly what I wanted to hear.

In July, members of our vestry met with the vestry of St. Christopher's to discuss the project. They were very supportive, but no definitive decision was reached. They did agree that they wanted to be part of the project. In September our vestry decided to get the ball rolling and voted to commit an initial \$5,000 to a building fund. We were able to take the money out of a certificate of deposit. In October, I met with Bishop Bartlett and brought him up date. He was

also very supportive, and thought the estimate was reasonable. I then told him that we had committed \$5,000. I asked him if he would be willing to match that amount, and to call Warren Davis to ask if he would ask his vestry also to match it. The Bishop agreed, and I sat there while he called Warren and asked him if St. Christopher's would match what we had done and put up \$10,000. I was in shock. I had intended for Bishop Bartlett to ask for only \$5,000. Before I could interrupt, Warren had agreed! I said to myself, "This might not be as hard as I thought." I would be wrong, but not about the money. That turned out to be the easy part. And a good thing it did. The \$50,000 estimate, in the end, turned out to be off by about \$60,000! If we had known that in the beginning, we would never have dared start. Over the next three years, St. John's, the Bishop, and St. Christopher's would put up even more money. We would also get money from the St. Matthew's Fund and from the Church of the Good Samaritan, Paoli.

3091 Emerald Street had been vacant for a number of years. About this time, the owner began taking an interest in his long neglected property. He knew we were interested in buying it, but he started making some repairs to the porch roof and adding some cosmetic touches to the interior, indicating that he wanted to fix it up for his son. In January, I met with him and told him I had the money to buy it. He decided to sell it to us, admitting that he really wasn't up to doing any more renovations. By April of 1989, we had an agreement of sale, worked out by Tom Bevan, a lawyer from St. Christopher's. The agreement was contingent on our receiving the necessary zoning variance.

Frank Hammerstrom, an architect from St. Christopher's, met with us, and began making the preliminary sketches. Tom Bevan handled the legal work for the zoning variance. The hearing was held in August, and by September we received notification of approval. Settlement was made on November 20, 1989. The purchase price was \$18,000.

Planning and fund raising continued. A joint building committee from both congregations was set up, and in June of 1990, the first phase of the renovations began on 3091. This consisted of rebuilding the back bays, putting on a new roof, and replacing some windows on the second floor. We wanted to stop the water damage in 3091 before we did any further work. It would be another year before the real work would begin.

We signed a contract with Jack Barclay, a builder and member of St. Christopher's, in July of 1991. The major construction, breaking through the walls, began on August 20. Bishop Bartlett dedicated the new parish house on December 8. In the Spring of 1992, some of the interior finishing touches were completed. For the next three Summers, another phase was completed. In 1993 it was the restoration of the front bays on both houses. In '94 the porches were restored with Greek columns. And finally, eight years after Paul Abbott tapped on the wall, the finishing touch, new porch railings, completed the project.

Church School/Youth Group

According to A History of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, St. John's had the largest church school in the diocese in 1916 with an enrollment of 954. Fifty years later the enrollment had declined to 45, and by 1974, there was no church school. Beginning in 1977, several attempts were made to revive the church school, but it was not a priority. Most of the time, it was baby-sitting and playtime with no curriculum.

In the Fall of 1984, several factors came into play. We seemed to have more children in the parish. Ray and Kathy Hanna had returned to Philadelphia following their graduation from the University of the South. Ray had been organist at St. John's before college, and was beginning the ordination process from St. John's. Kathy had a keen interest in starting a church school. At the time, Betty and I were engaged, and she also had an interest in seeing that we had a church school. I had taken some training in church growth, and remembered hearing that church schools were a key factor in growing churches. A couple of parents asked if a church school could be started. And, several older people thought it would be good for the children. My sense is that they thought it would get them out of church and make the service quieter.

We started on November 18 at 10 AM, moving the Sunday service to 11 AM. Our enrollment that year was 15. The next year it would be 28. With some ups and downs, we were on our way. In the Spring of 1985, we had a Christian Education consultant from the Diocese of Delaware (Kay Bennett, Kathy's mother), come for an all day planning session for the Fall. That helped lay the groundwork for a sustainable church school program. In the Fall, Ginny Kirk came to do fieldwork, and replaced Betty on the church school staff. Over the next few years, church members and seminarians would run the church school. Kathy Hanna left after 1987 when her husband went to seminary. Then, Deacon Kirk began supervision, teaching a class when necessary. From the Fall of 1991 to the Fall 1995, the church school was staffed entirely by parish members. This past year, each of the four classes was assisted by a member of the youth group.

As an outgrowth of our VBS program, we started a music program for the church school in 1994. The first fifteen minutes of the

morning are spent in the music room with the organist, Maria Ciocco. From time to time, the church school sings at the 11:15 service. Other special events include a Halloween Party, Christmas play, and Easter baskets. The proceeds from our annual Christmas Toy Shop go to support the church school program.

Many of the children in church school do not have parents, or relatives, who are members of the church. Some have come through our VBS program. While many of these parents show up for the special events involving the church school, we are concerned about how the children will be able to connect to the church. One response to this is to have the church school in church on the first Sunday of the month as described in another section, "Worship/Liturgical Changes".

There are a few people at St. John's who remember the Young Peoples' Fellowship of the 1950's. It was very active, holding dances and bowling in the old parish hall. In more recent times, youth work began in the early 1980's. At that time, Lynne Coughlin, joined the Fairmount Team Ministry as a youth worker. Churches in the Merion Deanery funded her position, and provided a van, with St. David's, Radnor taking the lead. She was introduced to the team by Fr. Fred Power's, rector at Good Shepherd and Emmanuel. She worked developing youth work in the various team churches, but primarily at Good Shepherd and St. Luke's.

At St. John's, Lynne started a girl's club. Only two of the twelve or so girls belonged to the church. Lynne's work concluded in 1984, and nothing more was done until 1988. At that point, we had a junior high class taught by Nancy Stroh. Then, John Dill had that class for two more years. During this time, we had a few sporadic events for that class, but no youth group. I remember taking them bowling a few times, and having a spaghetti supper for them.

By 1993, there was no longer a junior high class, so we started a youth group that Fall for 11 to 16 year olds. We had a dinner meeting one Sunday a month, and an outing one Saturday a month. The Fall went very well, but the Winter was harsh and pretty much wiped out the program. By the Spring, we were re-grouping and getting ready for the first Urban Serve (see "Partnerships").

The first two years, we had eight to ten active members, almost all from the church. By 1995, we had more than sixteen active

participants in the youth program. Five or six of them had been involved in the Urban Serve. Five worked with the church school as teacher aides. Beginning this Fall, we will again have a junior high class on Sunday mornings, with a dinner and fellowship time one month, and an outing the next month, and so forth. We are doing this because we found it difficult to do Bible study with them on Sunday evenings. Too many of those attending had no connection to the church, and it didn't go well, as it had in the past with a smaller group. Attendance at the class will be a prerequisite for the monthly events. We are also searching for ways to involve more youth in the worship of the church.

Ministry to Shut-ins

The ministry to the sick and shut-in is very important to me. This is reflected in the numbers found in the appendix "Service Register." In the interim period (January through September 1976), no private communions were administered to shut-ins. The previous year there had been 57. I did 12 in the last three months of 1976. By 1994, we peaked at 311 private communions. Over the years, the shut-in list has grown from 4 to between 24 and 26. It has stabilized in that range.

Some of our shut-ins are parishioners who have reached the point that they can no longer attend church. Many more came to the church as shut-ins. In 1988, I began making weekly visits to Northeastern Hospital as an ECS Associate Chaplain. I would get the names of Episcopalians from the computer print out. When I visited these patients, I often discovered that their connection to any church was tenuous at best. Many hadn't been in church since they were baptized. It became clear to me that the in-take question was, "What were you baptized?", and not, "What is your church?". So, I would approach these people by introducing myself, and saying, "The computer tells me you are an Episcopalian. Which church do you attend?" This usually led to the revelation that they were in fact un-churched. Sometimes, they would say they were a member of a church that had closed years ago. (If they were a member of an Episcopal church, I would offer to contact their priest.)

Every once in a while, an elderly patient would indicate a desire to reconnect to a church. Sometimes, I would ask them if they wanted to. If they said, "Yes", I would offer to put them on our shut-in list. Many of these people are coming back to the church and to the Lord at the end of their lives. Our monthly visits mean so much to them.

Ginny and I split the shut-ins into an A and a B list. We each do a different list the first week of each month. This is a high priority for us. We pray for our shut-ins every Sunday, and they are listed on the monthly Parish Prayer List that accompanies the newsletter. Every week they are sent the service leaflet with the lectionary insert. At Christmas, home-made cookies are baked and taken by parishioners to the shut-ins. On Palm Sunday, lay people volunteer to take them strips of palm.

Addiction/Recovery Concerns

Alcoholism and drug addiction are endemic to Kensington. It is said that there are more bars in Kensington than in any other neighborhood in the city. The neighborhood is gripped with fear because of the drug culture and the violence it breeds. I have been told that upwards of 80% of the drugs sold in the five county area, are sold within a one mile radius of Episcopal Hospital, which is only seven blocks from St. John's. We definitely have a major problem.

In 1989, Joyce Eckert became our parish Recovery Advocate for the diocesan Addictions Recovery Commission. In October of that year, She and I attended a workshop sponsored by ARC on "parishes as healing communities for those suffering and recovering from addictions." That was the beginning. Six weeks later, we held our first observance of Drug and Alcohol Awareness Sunday.

Two years later, we would be rejoicing in our new parish house that had doubled our space available for ministry. Discussions began in the vestry as to how we might best utilize the space, what kind of programs we might sponsor or house. I was clear that any new ministry would be a ministry of the congregation. Members of the congregation would have to be directly involved with it. There are always groups looking for space, but we were not interested in some sort of landlord/tenant relationship.

As we were going through this discussion, our neighboring congregation, St. Nathanael's, was on the verge of closing. By the grace of God, with a new parish house we were be able to accommodate an influx of new members from there. When St. Nathanael's finally closed, their two main ministries, a senior citizens' group and an AA group, had to relocate. I was approached by the leadership of their senior citizen group about using our space. The group was simply too large for even our expanded parish house. They found space close by us at Peace Lutheran Church.

At this time, Rick Gibbons came to St. John's from St. Nathanael's. He had been a new member there, and wasn't on either of the lists of parishioners that I had. He had come into St. Nathanael's through the KIS ("Keep It Simple") Group of Alcoholics Anonymous, located at the church. In July of 1992, Rick asked me to meet with the leadership of

the KIS Group to discuss the possibility of their meeting in our parish house. It was an answer to prayer, ours and theirs. It was also a major commitment. They had five meetings a week. On August 1, they began meeting in our parish house.

Shortly thereafter, some of their members began attending St. John's. Then, some of our members began attending the AA group. Rick became our parish Recovery Advocate, and a member of the vestry. In November of 1992, members of the KIS Group AA spoke to the congregation on Drug and Alcohol Awareness Sunday, and have every year since. A year later, the vestry adopted a alcohol-free policy for parish events.

Sometime later, Rick came to me to ask if they could add a Friday evening meeting. It would mean that they were meeting every day except Sunday. I said, "Okay." Then, awhile later, a request was made for a second meeting on Tuesday nights. This one for women. The answer was, "yes." Finally, the inevitable happened. A request was made for a meeting on the one day they didn't meet, Sunday. Now, they have eight meetings a week. Several half-way houses have opened in the neighborhood, and the residents attend the KIS Group. Sometimes there are over 100 attending a meeting.

Today, on any given Sunday, about 10% of the congregation is connected to the AA group. I presented a class of six to Bishop Turner when he made a parish visit this past April. Four of them were connected to the AA group. Respecting the boundaries of AA, we see the group as a ministry of the church, not just a group that uses our space.

Community Organizing

Back in the mid 1970's a community action organization called Kensington Action Now (KAN) was formed. St. Nathanael's was a member. Below Lehigh Avenue, there was another organization by the name of Kensington Joint Action Council (KJAC). Both St. Luke's and St. Barnabas' were members.

I hadn't been at St. John's very long before I discovered that there was a divergence of opinion as to whether we should join KAN, or not. Apparently, a couple of people on the vestry had had a negative experience with KAN. At least one other person thought the group was racist. This was because of the way KAN had drawn its boundaries. After some discussion at a vestry meeting, I decided not to put the matter to a vote. A few years later, the composition of the vestry had changed, and they were more open to consider joining. There was still the concern one vestry member had about race. No black organization belonged to KAN. Our solution was to join, and send as our representative the only black person on our vestry. Woody Anderson integrated KAN in the same way he had integrated St. John's. He later brought a couple of black block groups, and a black church into KAN. At one point, KAN sponsored an action that was hosted at the church, Disney A.M.E.

In the early 1980's, the major issues KAN focused on were economic: capital flight and red lining. Then the issues began to shift to crime and safety, arson, abandoned houses, and city services. It seemed to me that the organization had lost its focus. If there was an issue, KAN had a committee to address it. KAN formed a separate community development organization call Kensington Area Revitalization Project (KARP). For several years, I served on the KARP board, and was not directly involved with KAN. KARP focused on rehabilitating abandoned houses. By this time, Woody had moved to Virginia, and no one from St. John's stepped forward to take his place. That ended our involvement with KAN.

In early 1990, I met a number of times with organizers from the Industrial Areas Foundation who were exploring the possibility of establishing a church based community organization. Both the Bishop's office and ECS were supporting the effort. I went to a number of trainings, and attended sponsoring committee meetings.

But, I could never spark any interest in the parish. I finally gave it a rest. The organization that emerged from this became Philadelphia Interfaith Action (PIA).

In April of 1993, Debbie Fischetti, a long time organizer with KAN, came to my office to talk about a new direction KAN was taking. She explained how the KAN board had decided basically to go out of business, and re-emerge as a church based community organization in Eastern North Philadelphia. In the meantime, KAN would be the fiscal sponsor until the new organization could obtain its own 501C (3) tax exemption. I thought that this might fly where I hadn't been able to make a go of PIA.

In May, I met with Steve Honeyman. I had known him since the early 1980's when he had done some consulting with KAN, and through work he had done with a couple of Episcopal churches in Camden. We talked some more about starting a church based community organization. I signed on. In September a sponsoring committee was formed and eventually, I became a Co-chairperson. Debbie and Steve met with the vestry in October to talk about a new group called the Eastern Philadelphia Organizing Project (EPOP). It was an informational meeting only, so no action needed to be taken.

Meetings were held over the next year, building relationships and inviting exploration. Two Roman Catholic parishes, Nativity BVM, and Visitation joined, as did the Sheppard School Parents Association, and the Community Women's Education Project (CWEP). The base had been broadened to include other institutions that were rooted in the community, such as Youth United for Change, and several parent groups from other schools. In December of 1994, the vestry voted to join EPOP, and in February, we had a parish meeting to introduce EPOP and get more lay people involved in a parish leadership team.

The leadership team held a "Listening Sunday" in May of 1995. All of the concerns revolved around the familiar litany of ills found in a deteriorating neighborhood: drugs, violence, vandalism, graffiti, prostitution, abandoned buildings, cars, and tires, lack of jobs and city services, inadequate schools, and so forth. The leadership team took the information they heard on that Sunday, and concluded that the primary concerns of the church centered around issues affecting children and families. Two concerns facing the church were vandalism, and related to that, children playing in the church yard.

Franklin Playground is across the street from the church. However, it is considered unsafe, and the children prefer the church yard.

The leadership team also listened to neighbors around the church, and found that conditions at Franklin Playground were a major concern. From all of this, three issues emerged that we sensed we could tackle. The first was the disrepair of the tot lot. The second was the lack of safety at the playground. And, the third was the lack of organized activities for small children.

We had tried working with the Franklin Playground Advisory Committee, and found it to be totally disorganized and ineffective. We decided to take matters into our own hands. In July, we started the first of four monthly "Family Nights at Franklin". We invited parents with small children, those too young for organized sports, to come to the playground with their children for an evening of fun and games. Many parents would not allow their children to go to the playground because it wasn't safe. We wanted to change that by getting them to come out and take the playground back. These "Family Nights" have been very well received, and are continuing this Summer (1996). In addition to St. John's sponsoring one night a month, the playground staff are doing one a month also. Attendance has been good, and there has been increased parental involvement.

The leadership team spent most of the Fall of 1995 doing research on the tot lot issue. We had our first action on December 7. Over seventy people gathered in the parish house to meet with the Recreation Commissioner, the Police District Captain, and our City Councilman to demand that \$75,000 be put into the Capital Budget for a new tot lot at Franklin Playground. We also pledged to work with them to improve the playground, particularly with the police. The police have been included as part of the program at the "Family Nights" to build relationships with the community and improve the safety of the playground.

The leadership team continues to meet to explore other issues and directions. I believe such an organization as this is critical for the church's mission. Our neighborhood is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. The Hispanic population is growing. To a lesser extent, so is the African-American population. One of St. John's historic strengths has been its ability to reflect its neighborhood. With the changes that are taking place, EPOP will play a major role in

building relationships among diverse people that will be a key to our future.

Interviews

During the course of my leave time, I interviewed four people outside of the church lived and/or worked in Kensington for a significant length of time. Steve Honeyman is a community organizer. Debbie Fischetti teaches at the Community Women's Education Project. Larry McElvarr is a Funeral Director, and Dr. Edward Zimmerman is a physician. They have all experienced the changes in Kensington over the past twenty years.

Dr. Zimmerman has been around the longest and seen the most change. He took over a practice on Frankford Avenue in 1955. By 1979, this was the last medical practice left on the block, and he moved to Allegheny Avenue because the area had become too dangerous and many of his patients were afraid to come to his office. Many of his patients have left the neighborhood, but return for office visits. He says that most of them moved because of the drug problem. Dr. Zimmerman sees many elderly patients, and thinks many of his younger patients are less healthy than in the past. He attributes this to drugs and alcohol. There are fewer doctors in the neighborhood. As they retire, they are often not replaced. Those that do replace them are mostly Asian. He still makes house calls, a rarity these days. He has over 100 patients he visits from every two weeks to every six months. By making house calls, he has witnessed the decline and destruction of the neighborhood first hand, but he never considered relocating. It used to be that, as a General Practitioner, he was expected to do just about everything. Today, he makes a lot of referrals. Now his practice is owned by Temple University Hospital, and he is paid by them. It hasn't changed his style of practice.

Steve Honeyman has had connections with Kensington going back to the 1980's when he did some consulting with Kensington Action Now. He is currently the lead organizer for the Eastern Philadelphia Organizing Project (EPOP). It is his sense that massive disinvestment has occurred in Kensington, and there isn't much more to lose. Earlier organizing efforts focused on halting the decline, but they have failed due in part to the intensification of the drug culture. It is much more difficult for people to leave Kensington now than it was twenty years ago. There was also much less reason to leave twenty years ago. The change in demographics is moderated by the fact that most of the Anglo residents have nowhere else to go. As houses do become available, they tend to be bought by Hispanics, Blacks, and Asians.

Thus Kensington, once known as "Whitetown", is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic. The organizing efforts now must focus on building a community in which people will want to live. This will involve building relationships among the various ethnic groups. He sees St. John's as being a key player in bringing this about. It is also key to the future of St. John's.

Larry McElvarr bought a funeral home on Frankford Avenue in June of 1977. He has seen many changes in the neighborhood reflected in his business. For the first ten years his business grew, and he expanded by buying another funeral home in Fishtown. Over the next ten years or so, the business out of Frankford Avenue declined, as the Fishtown business grew. He noted that several funeral directors have open second homes in the Greater Northeast, some have gone out of business, and others have relocated to other neighborhoods. Several changes in his business stand out. He does many "economy" funerals, with a viewing and service at the same time, followed by cremation. He also has to do many more funerals of young people with drug related deaths. Evening viewings are less common. Often, the elderly he buries have families who no longer live in the neighborhood. After their deaths, most of their homes are sold to minorities. Virtually all of his funerals are Anglo, and he doesn't see this changing much in the near future. He can keep the business open while doing as few as twenty funerals a year, and he has no plans for closing it down. He would like to do more minority funerals, but he sees it as a tough market to get into. People can have a history with certain funeral homes, and will go back to them whenever the need arises.

Debbie Fischetti was born in Fishtown, and came to work for Kensington Action Now as an intern 1979. At that time, she was working on a master's degree in community organizing at Temple University. She stayed on with KAN, becoming the director several years later. Until a year ago, she worked with EPOP, and now is working on her doctorate at Temple in education, and teaching at the Community Women's Education Project at Frankford and Somerset. She too has witnessed the economic and physical decline of Kensington. In the early 80's, her work with KAN focused on issues affecting the neighborhood such as: arson, red-lining, disinvestment, safety, and abandoned houses. The focus was on external forces that impacted the community. Organizing revolved around mobilizing people's frustration and anger to affect change. She thinks what was missing in the process was the building of relationships that create

community. She noted a change in attitude from then to now. In the past, people focused their anger and frustration on outside forces (City Hall, corporations, banks). But now people are more likely to blame other people in the community. The problems are seen as the fault of "those people" (on welfare, on drugs, etc.). As Kensington becomes more ethnically diverse, such attitudes can take on a racist undertone. In the past, people would defend Kensington in spite of its problems (because the problems were seen as being caused by outside forces). Today, people will readily refer to Kensington as a "bad" neighborhood. This make organizing all the more difficult, and necessary. She sees the emphasis today needing to be focused on building relationships that create community. She sees St. John's, and other churches, playing a key role in building such relationships.

Summary/Conclusions

Looking back over what I have written, three events stand out that have had important implications for my ministry over the past twenty years. Perhaps the most significant was the sale of the parish hall in 1970, six years before my arrival. The second was my moving into the parish house in January of 1979, and the third was putting a new roof on the church in that same year.

The sale of the parish hall was a radical move for the congregation, and it had to be done if St. John's were to survive. While its loss was a shock to the system, it was also a relief, a lifting of an onerous burden. The sale provided money that would sustain the congregation for almost a decade. Without the sale, I am convinced St. John's would have had to close. As it was, it put St. John's in a sort of limbo. Without the burden of the building, they could now focus on ministry, but they lacked space with sufficient capacity for doing ministry. For two years there was no stable clergy leadership. Through this limbo, the church was sustained by the efforts of two key lay people, Marion Loeffler (no relation to Fr. Loeffler) and Jim Powick. Marion was Accounting Warden, and Jim was Rector's Warden. Marion was the altar guild, and main gate keeper of the church. Jim was superintendent of the Sunday School, lay reader, parish administrator, choir member, and liaison in the relationship with St. Philip's. They continued doing these during the part-time ministry of Fr. David Gracie. His ministry provided two and half years of solid pastoral ministry which, along with the work of Jim and Marion, formed a foundation that I would build upon.

My moving into the parish house was significant in a number of ways. It changed my perspective of and commitment to my ministry at St. John's. It gave me a visibility and an availability I had never experienced before. I could sense my vocation to parish ministry in a more focused way. Issues of abandonment and instability are part of the psyche of Kensington and St. John's. My moving into the neighborhood helped to resolve some of those issues. I was becoming part of the community. Being single gave me the freedom to commit to living in the neighborhood without the pressure of family responsibilities that make it difficult, if not impossible, for many clergy to engage in inner-city ministry. During this time, I probably would not have survived without the personal support of Marion Loeffler in the parish, and the support of the diocese through Bishop

Mosley. That move was a first step in what would turn out to be a long term pastorate.

The new roof was significant in at least three ways. First, by deciding to spent all their money on a 50 year roof, rather than save some on a 25 year roof, the vestry looked to a future well beyond themselves. Second, it was a visible sign of life and hope to the neighborhood. Within a year or two, the church would reflect the growth that began in the Fall of 1979. And third, the loss of income from the building fund increased our dependency on diocesan funding, which led to increasing diocesan commitment to the ministry of St. John's over the years.

Three support systems have been significant in the life of St. John's: the Fairmount Team Ministry, the bishops and staff, and COAC/DCMM. The team gave the leadership of St. John's a sense of the Church beyond themselves, and established a broader network of relationships among the parishes. This diminished much of the parochialism that afflicts many of our churches, and paved the way for people to connect with us when other congregations closed. This may be the ultimate legacy of the Fairmount Team Ministry. A second aspect of the team was the professional and personal support it provided the clergy. This was another element that enabled me to remain at St. John's. It was a setting in which Black, Hispanic, and White clergy met regularly to support one another and their ministries. It is one thing that is lacking in my ministry today.

Through the years, different bishops and their staff have had an impact on St. John's. The fact that a tripartite job was put together for me indicates some kind of support and commitment. But, it was never explicit, and never put into a context or strategy. I had a sense that they really didn't understand inner-city neighborhood churches. I was told by one staff person, as I was looking into St. John's, "There's not much of a ministry there." What I didn't ask was, "Then why are you going to all this trouble to put me there?" When the vestry met with Bishop Ogilby, during his episcopal visitation in 1978, they asked him point blank if he intended to close St. John's at some future time. He gave no definitive response. In 1985, during an episcopal visitation by Bishop Mosley, he commented to me in the sacristy, "Gee, St. Nathanael's is less than a five minute drive from here." That sent a chill down my spine. I mumbled something about folks not having cars, and then changed the subject. And, the support continued. But, again it seemed more based on personal relationships

and trust. Decisions seemed to be made by default, if at all. I also observed that changes in aided congregations from full-time to part-time, or even closing, only occurred during a vacancy, and only once was a vicar terminated (and that by a staff person who didn't last long). From this, I learned the importance of staying put. I sensed a commitment to clergy, not to parishes.

Bishop Ogilby gave up control of funding for aided congregations when he created the Coalition of Aided Congregations in the early 70's. If there was any strategy, that was it. It provided funding for St. John's because I had relationships with clergy within COAC, and because we were part of the team, giving us political clout (votes). Some of the worst meetings of my life were spent on Saturday mornings at COAC/DCMM. They were frustrating because there never was enough money, and not enough trust to make really hard decisions. It seem to me that the system operated on fear and collusion. I sensed that people feared they wouldn't get adequate funding, because of the system of voting, and they avoided making tough decisions because the next tough decision might go against their congregation. This reinforced decision making by default.

Things began to change with Frank Turner (He wasn't a bishop yet). COAC became the Diocesan Coalition for Mission and Ministry. The key was his taking a more assertive and proactive role within DCMM. With a shift in emphasis to mission and ministry, attitudes within DCMM and perceptions outside of DCMM began to change. With Frank Turner, we had someone with much more understanding of inner-city neighborhood congregations. He has an infectious enthusiasm that changed how it felt to be in an aided congregation. DCMM began to promote itself as representing churches on the cutting edge of ministry. The rest of the diocese began to get the message. In past conventions, questions were asked as to how the diocese could afford to support so many congregations that were a drain on its assets. Now questions were being asked as to how we could more fully fund these vital parishes!

Significant changes came to DCMM with the appointment of John Midwood as Archdeacon in 1989. A new system was put in place with defined categories of aided congregations. It spelled out the responsibilities of the congregation and the commitments of the diocese. Clear expectations of congregations and their v^e established. By declaring St. John's, and five other congr^e diocesan mission, we knew that a commitment was being

the parish, not just to the priest. By agreeing to pay the salary package of the vicars of diocesan missions, the diocese was making a clear decision of support for them. This new system has been a clear benefit to me and to the congregation. Uncertainty has been replaced by clarity. I feel a greater sense of focus and dedication to my ministry. This has given me more energy to do the work of ministry, and see some of its fruits. I think it is significant that several years ago, in a series of meetings for lay people to give input for the diocesan budget, funding for DCM was received the highest priority.

St. John's has clearly benefited from the closure of neighboring congregations, especially St. Nathanael's. Now that we are the sole remaining Episcopal congregation in the area, we can expect no more growth from that avenue. In the past, we experienced modest growth from the unchurched of the neighborhood. Most of these people were former Roman Catholics with a pastoral problem their church would not handle. They were either divorced and seeking a church for a second marriage, or there was a child to be baptized whose parents were not married. In these cases, the people were invited to attend St. John's for a period of time, after which the service could be performed, with the expectation that they would continue at St. John's. Some did. Some didn't. More recently our numbers have grown due to our Sunday School and Youth Group. At this point, about 1/3 of those who actively participate in the life of St. John's in some form are under the age of 16. Most of these young people are neither communicant or baptized members. Even fewer have parents who are connected to the church. We do pick up some people from the KIS Group of AA. Future sustainable growth will only come as we are capable of attracting people new to the neighborhood. These people will be predominantly Hispanic, Black, and Asian. We have done this to some extent in our Church School and Youth Group. We need to bring in the adults. Some of the questions we face are: How do we do it? When do we do it? What changes are we willing to make without giving up our core values? And, what additional resources will we need from the diocese to make this transition?

In addition to dealing with the issues raised by becoming a more ethnically diverse congregation, we are dealing with changes brought about by the increase in size when St. Nathanael's people joined us. We're not just bigger, we're different. The dynamics are different and the style of leadership needs to change to reflect this. Deacon Kirk and I are working with the vestry on this issue. In the past, clergy leadership was dominant, and appropriately so. Now, we need

to be developing more lay leadership and delegating more responsibility. There is simply more than a priest and a non-stipendiary deacon can do by themselves.

Finally, as I spent time focusing on my twenty years at St. John's, I became much more appreciative of the 115 years of parish history before my tenure. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." (1Corinthians 3:6) And so, I see my work as being built upon a foundation, Jesus Christ, and those in the past who were faithful to him and his Church. I seek not to be successful, but faithful, as I follow in their footsteps, sustained by the words of St. Paul: "Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we ask or imagine; Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus forever and ever. Amen." (Ephesians 3:20,21)